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DISCOURSE ON THE ARTS.

BY DU PERRON.

Translated from the French, for THE CRAYON, by Rembrandt Peale.

To speak of painting is to make its eulogy. The utmost pomp of eloquence can add nothing to its excellence. The most delicate touches, the boldest figures, the noblest terms, the most lively images, can add nothing to the esteem which has ever been excited for this Art. Venus and the Graces, to enchant us, have no need of that false dress and deceitful ornament which often serve to cover the defects of Nature. Such is painting—whose glorious value is attested by the number of its admirers; for who is insensible to the charms of this delightful Art? Who is not filled with admiration at the sight of the masterpieces of past ages, as well as those of the present day?

The lively and sudden impression made on us by the pencil of the great artist, gives to painting her rank as the sister of poetry, and an equal share of applause. Both furnish us with an abundant source of pleasures, always new: one agitates the heart, the other enchantas the mind: the eyes, the ears are charmed—and both affect us with an equal power. Painting, which is silent poetry, offers to our view whatever the warmth of genius, the fire of a lively imagination, can produce by the most delicate hand and the happiest touches. Poetry, which is audible painting, delights us by its harmony, and instructs us by the memorable actions of heroes, and marks them with the stamp of immortality. In fact, these two Arts excite in us sensations so pleasant, and deceive us so agreeably, that the canvas almost breathes, and the most inanimate object swells into life.

How universal is the use of painting! It is the language of all the earth. Her universal expressions address themselves to every nation, and speak to their eyes with a native eloquence. Painting, like beauty and harmony, is nowhere a stranger. Her power acknowledges no limits. Domesticated everywhere, sovereign of every country, she exercises her power as triumphant queen of the world. Wherever there are human beings of delicacy and sentiment, there are her altars and her temples.

Painting, as the rival of Nature, multiplies her various forms, and gives them a new existence. At her order phenomena arise, masterpieces blossom. She speaks, and the earth, which she has created, becomes fertile and produces fruit—the fields are spread with a soft verdure, and display the richest coloring—a thousand flowers delight the sight by the variety of their hues. Everything becomes animated by her voice—the skies brighten; the trees grow; the forest is peopled; the mountains rise; the waters hollow out their channels; the sea is covered with vessels; cities are built, and superb palaces arise. Sometimes, such is her eagle flight, she penetrates the sanctuary of Heaven, and seeking a divine communion, attempts to personify the Deity. Sometimes, with a less elevated flight, she is pleased to retrace the actions of mere mor-

tals: at others, she sounds the heroic trump, or touches the tender pipe; sometimes she loves to represent opposing armies, frightfully intermingled in the heat and turmoil of battle.

More energetic, more expressive than eloquence, painting alone possesses the advantage of exhibiting every object with its proper color, and in all its truth. A single glance is sufficient to receive the most just and precise idea of what the longest and most brilliant discourse can only in part delineate and imperfectly portray. She seizes, she surprises Nature, in her productions. She examines and combines their mechanism—she imitates them—copies all their appearances. To Nature she owes her finest coloring, but she selects, embellishes, and dresses it with new grace.

What do we not owe to thee, charming Art! To please us thou takest a thousand new forms, ranging from one beauty to another. Within the city walls we receive from thee the charms of pastoral beauty. Amidst the retirement of the country thou dost display the pomp of cities; and in the gloom of winter spreadest out the laughing dress of spring. All hasten to share thy favors—thou art the amusement of social life, the ornament of every state, the pleasure of every condition of man. The rich, in the bosom of their grandeur, delight in thee—and kings descend from their thrones to bestow their admiration.

Observe the man of feeling before the picture by a great master. The most hidden charms, the most secret springs put in play by the painter, are invited to his penetrating eye—nothing escapes him. He sees the disposition of the whole; the order, the economy of the work, the wisdom of the composition, the variety, the contrast of the figures, the diversity of the attitudes, the fine choice of the draperies. He comprehends the skill displayed in the coloring, the learned distribution of the lights, the union of the lights and shades, the harmony of the tones and colors, the magic of the *clair obscur*—he judges of the beauty of the episodes, and the truth of the accompaniments. . .

Peaceful in herself, rich in her own means, painting can dispense with many other Arts, whilst every other Art requires her assistance. She imitates them in all their beauty. Her light and shade so perfectly represent sculpture, her various colored stones and marbles represent architecture with so much truth. . .

Painting reanimates those warriors whose exploits have been crowned by victory—those generous citizens who have sacrificed themselves for their country. She presents us those learned men who have enlightened the ages in which they lived; those artists whose talents have rendered them celebrated; those precious men, sages who have surprised the world with their virtues. . . She restores to his family the countenance of a deceased father. She restores a beloved husband to his affectionate spouse. She revives the image of an absent friend. She calms the poignant grief of a lover, in offering him the silent image of the object of his tenderness. She employs the darkest

colors to picture vice ; and, smitten with the charms of virtue, she employs her pencil to lend her a new lustre, to give her new charms, to render her more attractive. . . .

But where am I—where transported ? Is it an illusion or a reality which strikes me ? What powerful attraction holds my senses in suspense ? What pompous edifice opens before my astonished sight ? Is it the enchanted palace of some divinity ? In these surprising beauties—these striking decorations—I recognize thy temple, O Painting ! Where all thy treasures are displayed, thy riches dispensed, thy varied charms kindly spread out before our eyes. Here a frightful desert gives place to a superb city—the humble cottage is changed into a sumptuous palace. Here Flora embellishes the scene with her gay attire—there Bacchus and Ceres enrich it with their gifts. Now the barren mountains, the desert fields, uncultivated and uninhabited countries, depress our spirits ; and again we rejoice at the sight of a hamlet in a delightful spot. . . . To night the most obscure, and to darkness the most profound, succeeds serenity and the brightness of a beautiful day. . . .

THE T SQUARES.

NO. I—PHILOLOGUS BROWN.

ONE day last fall I left my office early in the afternoon, on various errands, which detained me until after business hours; when I returned it was some time after sunset, and the moon was shining brightly through one of the windows, illuminating my desk and my old arm-chair, and casting dark shadows over the rest of the room. I was somewhat weary and heated, and felt a strong inclination to sit down in my chair, to rest awhile before I finally left for home. How long I sat there I can hardly tell ; to judge by the time when I left, it must have been an hour or more ; but I can relate to the reader what occurred while there. I had scarcely begun to review in my mind the occurrences of the day, when I heard a noise in a remote corner of the room, something like two persons conversing in an under tone. Although I was sure there was nobody in the place, as I found the door locked when I came in, my feelings, on hearing the sounds, were less those of surprise than of curiosity to hear the conversation. I listened very attentively, therefore, and soon made up my mind that the sounds proceeded from a corner of the room which was now perfectly dark, where I knew my T Squares were—hung up on a nail. One of them was a long one, made of linden, the other was made of polished steel. Straining every nerve to catch the purport of the low sounds, I finally heard the steel Square say, " You need not set up any pretension of superiority in this democratic country, and whatever merits you claim on account of age, size, and experience, I think I may venture to say, I am not to be despised for my youth ; the strength of the material I am made of guarantees a future which may be more brilliant than your past, and my weight may be considered an offset to your size, and as to experience,—well, I must confess you may be superior in that ;—perhaps, it would be more becoming, however, to instruct me than to treat me with contempt, seeing that we have been thrown together, and are likely to remain in each other's society for some time. Suppose we at once relinquish all social distinc-

tions, and make ourselves as agreeable to each other as we possibly can. Now, I, for my part, would much like to hear your history ; I have no doubt I could learn much that would be of use to me in after life, to say nothing of your example in the way of imparting to me that refinement which will render me worthy of your friendship."

The long Linden Square felt evidently flattered ; its vanity had been touched. It swung to and fro several times, with a clatter somewhat in the same way as a popular speaker brushes up his hair, and places his thumbs in the armhole of his vest, by way of a prelude ; " My dear fellow, I shall certainly be much pleased to extend to you any information in my possession, and I have no doubt I can give you some valuable hints as to matters and things in this office, also in others, in which I have served with distinction. As to pride, I am not guilty of such a weakness, although I have always cherished a proper degree of self-respect, which I think I owe to the antique institution of Linden T Squares. I must confess, that I have looked upon Iron Squares as upstarts who may some day crowd us out of our position in the artistic and scientific world, but seeing that you are so very polite and appreciative, I will extend to you the hand of fellowship, and give you some sketches of the more important events of my eventful life. I am part of a large linden tree which once stood in front of a baronial castle on the Rhine. The young baron went to Paris, where he spent more money than his father could conveniently provide for him. The old man one day, in a fit of desperation, gave orders to have every tree cut down on the place, that could be well spared, so as to raise an extra revenue towards paying the debts of his boy. You may imagine, and yet, perhaps, you can't, for really I do not know the exact imaginative capacity of Iron T Squares,—I say you may imagine what were the feelings of my parent tree when it was understood that he also was marked for the axe. That venerable tree felt sincerely attached to the place : it had seen the father of the old baron when he was a little boy, riding a hobby-horse under its shade ; besides, I must confess there was a lurking apprehension that its parts might, perhaps, be applied to some useful purpose, which is very unpleasant to a baronial shade tree, that had spent a century in genteel idleness. However, the fatal day arrived, and with it the fatal axe, and my parent tree—that is, the trunk, was cut up into boards, and sold to a cabinetmaker. These were finally, after the lapse of some three years of retirement in a loft, subdivided into drawing boards, squares, and triangles, put together with great care, and sold to the dealers. After hanging in a narrow, dark store, with a strong smell of musk, for about two months I was resold one fine morning to a young student who used me once or twice and then left me neglected for some considerable time in one corner of a room, from whence I was finally taken, to be packed up in the bottom of a big box, and shipped to this country. Arrived here, my owner could find no one who would employ him, and when his money was all gone, he one day sold me for a small sum, to a practical architect, by the name of Brown," Philologus Brown—

" Excuse me for interrupting you," claimed in the Iron T Square ; " What, pray, is a practical architect ? I always thought that all architects who were actively engaged in business were practical architects ?"

" Well," continued the Linden Square, " that is the way we understand the thing now at the present day ; but you will remember that my advent in this country occurred some nineteen years ago ; then a practical architect was so termed,